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Summary: Stella manages to bind Pennywise's soul to her own in an attempt to use his power for her own purposes. In a battle of wills, they'll fight for the dominant role.

Bound

Stella gathered up her various tools into a large rucksack and stole away into the inky black night. The air was warm, and the sky crackled with lightning, briefly illuminating the storm clouds overhead.

She pulled her hood down further, casting her face into shadow as she passed under a street lamp.

How it did it come to this? She wondered as she walked with purpose down the deserted road. *How did I come to this?*

But these were questions she already knew the answers to, and it did no good to dwell on them.

When Stella reached her destination, she sat her pack down on the ground and wiped the sweat from her brow. She pulled out her cell phone and did a quick check of her map. This was indeed the right place.

The houses in this part of the small town were empty and neglected, and had been for years by the looks of it. But this particular lot was empty, just a half-acre of dead grass.

The wind picked up and blew her hood back, carrying with it the scent of rain. It was time to get to work.

She opened the sack and took a large, dog-eared book and sat it on the ground. Next she pulled out a glass vial containing a dark, liquid substance. After that, an envelope and a knife.

Then she took out the most important tool of all - the artifact, as Mike had called it. It was pyramid-shaped, with a round opening at the top, and felt like it was made of leather. It was scratched and badly damaged, but still somehow retained its shape.

Stella sat down on the grass and opened her book. The information she'd obtained, and the items surrounding her, had been very difficult to acquire. She'd lied, delved into the occult, paid ridiculous amounts

of money, and fought to achieve everything leading up to tonight. She silently prayed to whoever was listening that the end result would not disappoint.

The sky grumbled loudly and she knew the storm was nearly upon her. She quickly opened the envelope and took out a lock of flaming orange hair. She ran it through her fingers, and then dropped it into the open mouth of the artifact. Next she poured in the substance from the vial. *Could it really be his blood?* A chill crept up her spine. *It damned well better be.*

She took out a small canister of water - taken from the local sewer - and poured it into the artifact.

"Bound through fire," she breathed over it. "Freed through water."

This is a load BS, her logic insisted. But she shoved those thoughts away. She needed to believe.

Slowly and deliberately, she arranged a circle of candles around her on the ground and lit each one in turn, chanting a stabilizing spell as she did so. Though the wind blew, the flames didn't falter. A small, hopeful smile crept onto her face. This might really work.

When she was finished, she sat down again in the center of the circle of candles and placed the artifact between her legs. She took the knife and swiftly cut a line down the middle of each palm. Holding her hands over the artifact, she let her blood drip into the water.

She found she didn't need the book to remember the incantation. It came back to her like an old friend. The words she spoke were not in a language known to Man, but the meaning was clear in her mind, and she poured every fiber of her being into it.

Finally she cried loudly, raising her hands into the air, "Open, Void, and release the life you have claimed."

There was a flash of lightning in the sky above, but she heard no sound. An acrid smell filled the air and she scrambled to her feet, preparing to face what came next.

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It awakened for the first time in what felt like a millenia. Something had changed, a subtle shift in the Void. There was a light up ahead, where no light except its own had ever dared to shine.

It was curious. What was this new development? It had to find out, for it was so very hungry.

When it reached the source of the light, it shrank back momentarily in fear. There was a tear in the fabric of its universe, and light was pouring in - a familiar light. But the figure who stood in the doorway was anything but familiar.

The being stood there, human in shape, energy coming off of it in waves. There was no fear in this being. And its eyes - oh, its eyes! They burned with the light of a thousand sunsets.

It shrank back further, watching the being. Had this thing come to do even more hurt than had already been inflicted?

But then the being reached out its hands, and spoke in a voice like the summer rain. "Join me."

It was stunned, unsure what to do next. But in an instant, the being and all its glory was gone. Only the small rip in the Void remained.

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Stella felt the gateway open into the Void even though she couldn't see it, and she felt... Its... presence near the opening. She reached out and called to it, hoping that it could hear her and would listen - and not immediately try to devour her.

She reached out with her aura, projecting the most powerful imagery and force of will she could muster.

"Hey! This is private property!"

She spun around, caught off guard by the sudden intrusion. There were two men standing at the edge of the yard. They couldn't have been much older than her, probably thirty or so.

"What the fuck are you doing?" one of the men said, coming closer as

he gestured to the circle of candles. "Some kind of witchy shit?"

"None of your business," she replied coldly. "Does this property belong to the two of you?"

"That's none of your business," the other man fired back, coming to stand beside the first one. He put his hands on his hips as he looked her up and down.

"I ought to call the cops," he mused. "Get you fined for trespassing."

He thought for a moment, looking around the yard. "Or you could pay me a little fine and I'll forget I ever saw you."

He grinned as he suggestively rubbed his crotch. His friend let out a soft chuckle.

"What'll it be, witch?"

Her eyes narrowed. "I think I'll choose the real fine. I'm sure it'll be more pleasurable than anything you two could offer." She looked down her nose condescendingly at the man's bulge.

"Bitch," he spat. "I ain't asking any more."

In unison they rushed her, tackling her to the ground and scattering the contents of the artifact. She scratched, bit, and punched, but she was no match for two of them.

They pinned her to the ground, her arms held behind her. None of them noticed the figure standing there, watching them.

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It stepped through the tear and out into the familiar town of Derry just as the rain began to fall, and took its favorite shape - Pennywise the Clown.

He saw three humans struggling on the ground, but where was the being who had summoned him? He looked around agitatedly.

Then he felt it; the same power and aura was coming from the female

that was restrained by the two bigger males. He snarled. How could a soul so grand be trapped in such a frail body? But it hardly mattered.

Pennywise was old. He'd been around. He knew exactly what the two men were about to do to the woman. Normally he would eat all three without a second thought. But one of them was different. One of them had a soul that blazed like fire, and she had already chosen him, called him out of the Void and brought him back from his death. She would be his alone.

These thoughts were not typical of Pennywise the dancing clown, but this was a new day.

"Oh boys," Pennywise said in a high, sing-song voice.

The men both looked up in shock and confusion.

"Would you like a balloon?" Pennywise asked, holding out a shiny red one that had appeared on a string in his hand.

"Is the circus in town?" one man asked the other.

"Don't think so."

The first man stood up, leaving his friend to restrain the still-struggling Stella.

"Get lost, clown," he warned.

"But I want to play," Pennywise giggled. "Balloon?" He held it out once again.

The man was angry now. He stormed across the yard. "I'll tell you what you can do with that fucking balloon, you -"

But he never finished his sentence. In a flash of sharp teeth and widening jaws, Pennywise was on him, tearing into his neck.

"Holy shit!" The second man let go of Stella and jumped up. He turned to run, but she grabbed his ankle and tripped him.

He hit the ground hard, and kicked Stella in the mouth as he tried to

break her hold.

"Who's the bitch now?" Stella asked him with a wicked smile as she wiped the blood from her lips.

Pennywise shot forward and was on top of the second man in an instant. His screams for help quickly turned into a small, garbled noise as he fed on him, then died out altogether.

Stella got up quickly and dusted herself off. If this went down wrong, she knew it would be curtains for her. *So get it right!* she told herself.

Pennywise finished with the man and stood up to his full height. His face was streaked with blood, and his amber eyes glowed hotly.

Stella stood perfectly still as he approached her.

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Pennywise stared hard at the woman. Her aura was dimmer now than when he'd first seen her reaching out from across the void. He could sense great deals of past traumas in her, wars fought within that had made her cold and cruel, and hot with rage. She was a warrior, but even so, she had a seed of fear deep within her. He could see it now that she was so close.

Pennywise scoffed to himself. This was no goddess, as he'd first thought. This was a human who knew how to project a sense of fearlessness and grandeur. Tough, but nothing special.

His teeth found their way back out as he began to grin at her.

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Shit...

Stella took a step backwards, and Pennywise took one forward.

"I brought you back to life," Stella said firmly, "for a reason."

"Oh?" Pennywise asked with mock curiosity as he began to drool.

"I need you to lend me your power, in return for resurrecting you." Stella pulled the knife out of her pocket and opened it.

Pennywise began to cackle maniacally. "You humans. You always think something is owed to you for your good deeds."

It was now or never. Stella ran forward, taking Pennywise completely by surprise. She cut a small gash in his chest and shoved her bloody palm against it.

Pennywise, recovering quickly, opened his maw wide and bit down on the area between Stella's shoulder and neck, his teeth grinding into her bones.

The pain seared through to her core, nearly causing Stella to black out. But she held on to consciousness and began to whisper a spell against the clown's chest.

It was an ancient incantation of the joining of two souls, merging them into one, binding them forever. She could feel her blood mingling with the blood from the gash on Pennywise's chest.

Stella's vision blurred and she dipped out of consciousness as a memory resurfaced in her mind.

Why do you want to learn such a dangerous spell?

You needn't ask me such questions, Master. You already know I would use it only for good.

All I know, Stella, is that you are an excellent student - and a horrible liar.

But you will still teach me?

Yes.

Stella's consciousness returned, and so did the pain. She groaned. Pennywise was still clamped down on her, his tongue exploring the wound he had created.

She finished the spell in a rush and felt a jolt of energy run through

her. Pennywise immediately released her, and tried to pull away, but she clung to him fiercely, refusing to lose the connection.

She felt her essence leaking out of the cut on her palm, and a new essence, his soul, entering her body and melding with hers.

"What are you doing to me?" Pennywise practically whined, his eyes panicked.

"Probably the dumbest thing I've ever done."

Pennywise raked his claws across her face in an effort to escape, and instantly the same marks appeared on his own face.

"It's done," Stella breathed as she sank to the ground, utterly exhausted.

Already the wound by her neck and the marks on her face were healing, as were Pennywise's. Apparently his rapid healing qualities were now shared. Stella felt greatly relieved at the realization.

Pennywise snarled angrily at her. "What have you done to me, human?"

"Our souls are joined together now," she told him, shakily getting to her feet.

He shook his head frantically, the bells on his tattered costume jingling. "No!"

He lunged at Stella, knocking her off her feet and straddling her. His face split open, teeth running all the way up both red lines on his cheeks.

Stella wasn't afraid anymore. She had him right where she wanted him.

Pennywise bit Stella's arm, but reeled back with a yelp as bloody bite marks appeared on his own arm.

"Now you understand," Stella said icily, holding her arm where he'd bitten her.

Pennywise growled horribly as his face went back to that of the clown. He jumped up and off of her, then he was gone.

Stella lay in the grass for an hour after that, staring up into the dark clouds above. She was too tired and sore to move, and completely unsure how to feel.